



**MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE EDINA
PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2005, 7:00 PM
EDINA CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
4801 WEST 50TH STREET**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Michael Schroeder, Michael Fischer, John Lonsbury, Helen McClelland,
David Runyan, Geof Workinger, Stephen Brown, Floyd Grabiell and David
Byron**

STAFF PRESENT:

Craig Larsen and Jackie Hoogenakker

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes of the August 31, 2005, meeting were approved and filed as submitted.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

**P-05-3 Amendment to the Overall Development Plan
for Centennial Lakes
Cypress Equities
7311 France Avenue South**

Mr. Larsen addressed the Commission and informed them the proponents have returned with a revised plan addressing issues raised at the previous planning commission meeting. Mr. Larsen asked the commission to note the height of the proposed condo tower has been reduced.

Mr. Larsen concluded staff recommends approval of the Amendment to the Centennial Lakes Overall Development Plan. The proposed uses are consistent with the Master Plan. While the amount of non-residential is greater than a strict allocation would allow, staff believes it is unlikely that all the development rights will be used by others. Mr. Larsen pointed out the proposed redevelopment is also consistent with the most recent draft of the Greater Southdale Area Land Use and Transit Study. Although the proposed height

variance is large, staff supports approval. There is no other location on the site that would eliminate the variance. Also, staff feels this is an appropriate location for a tall building. The proposed building is the same height as Edinborough's Park Plaza. Approval should be conditioned on: Final site plan approval, Park Director approval of any changes to the park landscaping, Proof of right to use Gallagher Drive as access to the development, Watershed District permits and Developer's Agreement.

The proponents, Mr. Brett Witzig, Cypress Equities, Mr. Walter Hughes, Humphreys and Partners Architects, and Mr. Robert Minks, Staubach were present.

Chair Byron acknowledged the changes to the proposal adding he continues to worry about traffic on France Avenue. Chair Byron said his concern is also with Gallagher Drive; pointing out access is provided to this site via an easement. Chair Byron pointed out the Transportation Committee suggested that sidewalks be constructed and that there are assurances from the developer that on-site parking is adequate.

Commissioner McClelland said she is still unclear on how the proponents arrived at 88 units. Commissioner McClelland stated she has a problem accepting 88 residential units as a fixed number. She asked why that number is sacred. Mr. Larsen responded 88 units is the amount calculated as appropriate for this parcel. 88 is based on the formula used to develop the Centennial Lakes Master Plan. Commissioner McClelland questioned what else is included in that formula. Mr. Larsen responded the formula included residential, office and commercial elements with the number "88" based on the size of the subject site. The original "formula" included 1085 residential housing units and over 1 million square feet of office/retail space. Mr. Larsen reiterated 88 units are a reasonable unit allocation for this parcel. Commissioner McClelland commented she is still confused on why 88 is so firm. Mr. Larsen responded everything is based on the original Master Plan and what was developed and what wasn't developed. Presently the entire Centennial Lakes site is developed with less residential units than originally approved. Commissioner McClelland commented it appears close to 700 residential units did not get built. Mr. Larsen responded that is correct. Commissioner McClelland commented there must be more to the formula and asked Mr. Larsen the percentage. Mr. Larsen responded in the original Centennial Lakes Master Plan the entire site was designated for 1085 residential dwelling units. Mr. Larsen said presently roughly 350 residential units were built. Commissioner McClelland reiterated she wants to know where the 88 unit count is coming from, and re-questioned what percentage of the site is allocated for residential. Mr. Larsen responded the original Master Plan did not deal with percentages - that was not the way City calculations worked. Chair Byron clarified, if he understands correctly, in the original plan 1085 residential units dwelling, and 1,256,000 square feet of non residential space was approved. Mr. Larsen responded that is correct. Commissioner McClelland said she is still

unclear on where the 88 unit count is coming from, and why that number is so firm. Mr. Larsen responded 88 units are 12% of those units that did not get built, and it is the proper residential unit allocation for this parcel.

Commissioner Grabiell asked if the row townhouse development (the Coventry) across the pond could have been developed with more units. Mr. Larsen responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Workinger asked if a hotel was ever considered in the original development plan. Mr. Larsen responded a hotel was considered, however, one proposal had the majority of the hotel constructed in Bloomington with the parking area in Edina. That never materialized and a restaurant (Ciao Bella) was constructed instead of the hotel.

Chair Byron asked Mr. Larsen what area actually encompasses the Centennial Lakes Master Development Plan site; does it include the Marshall Fields Home Store, Byerly's? Mr. Larsen responded the subject property is the most north/west point of the site. He added the Centennial Lakes site does not include Marshall Fields Home Store or Byerlys. To clarify Mr. Larsen told the Commission the Centennial Lakes site consists of 95 acres with Gallagher Drive its north boundary, France Avenue its west boundary, Edinborough Way its east boundary, and Minnesota Drive its south boundary.

Commissioner Workinger asked if redevelopment were to occur on other parcels within the Centennial Lakes site could more residential units be added. Mr. Larsen said the site was approved with a firm maximum number of units, adding it is possible more residential units could be added.

Mr. Brett Witzig, Cypress Equities, addressed the Commission and explained revisions were made to the proposal in response to comments received from the Commission at their last meeting. Continuing, Mr. Witzig explained the height of the condo tower has been reduced to 15, with each floor containing six (6) units. The units in the revised plan are not as large as the units in the previous submittal. Mr. Witzig said their target remains the high end user, adding they believe affording the condo units and proposed restaurants a view of the lake is a plus and recognized amenity. Mr. Witzig noted previously the Commission expressed concern with regard to pedestrian traffic in the plaza area pointing out those concerns were addressed with additional crosswalks and parking eliminated along the east side of plaza. Mr. Witzig added the sidewalk on France Avenue also allows access to this site. Concluding, Mr. Witzig pointed out another change includes the proposed retail along France Avenue, which now can be considered a stand alone center.

Chair Byron commented as he reviewed the plans part of his focus was on the proposed restaurants, their size, seating capacity and how they relate to the park. Continuing, Chair Byron asked the proponents if they know the seating

capacity of both restaurants and if their parking calculations include restaurant seating both indoor and on the proposed patio areas. Mr. Witzig responded he is unsure if they have figures pertaining to the exact amount of restaurant seating. Mr. Witzig pointed out at this time they are entertaining restaurants and have not made a decision on the type of restaurants that will be located in the restaurant areas. Mr. Witgiz said one restaurant site appears to be suited to a steak house. Mr. Hughes interjected adding the proposal includes roughly 20,000 square feet of restaurant area(s). Chair Byron asked if the square footage of the restaurants includes the patio areas. Mr. Hughes responded at this time he is unsure if the square footage of the patio(s) are included in the calculations. Chair Byron suggested that the proponents know this number before appearing before the Council; adding for a project this size the packet appears a bit skinny. Concluding, Chair Byron asked how pedestrian traffic would flow between restaurants. Mr. Witzig said each restaurant would be self contained.

Mr. Larsen commented it is not unusual at this time in the process for the proponents not to have all the facts. He pointed out this proposal is in the preliminary stages. The exact number of restaurant seating will be firmed up at the time of final approval. Mr. Larsen said at this time the Commission should focus on the larger picture; which is if the proposed uses are appropriate for this site. Mr. Bob Minks, told the Commission he has had preliminary talks with certain up-scale restaurants, but at this time cannot confirm who they are and their exact seating needs.

Commissioner McClelland commented when she reviewed the plans she also observed one of the restaurants has an outdoor patio area with seating at grade level, adding she continues to worry about isolating the public park by creating a barrier. Commissioner McClelland pointed out it appears the patio directly abuts the public path, creating the possibility of trash spilling onto the path. Continuing, Commissioner McClelland said she appreciates what has been accomplished thus far; however, she wants assurances the patio area doesn't shut off a whole corner of the public park. Mr. Witzig responded it is not the goal of Cypress to isolate the park. He added the park is an amenity that we recognize, and special attention has been made to tie the park and lake to this development. Mr. Witzig pointed out anyone can park in our parking areas and visit the park, the path isn't obstructed, reiterating they view the park as an asset to their development. Commissioner McClelland commented she still has concerns.

Commissioner Lonsbury asked Mr. Larsen for clarification on if the site/patio is private property, especially as it relates to park property. Mr. Larsen responded the entire subject site is private property that abuts City park property. Mr. Larsen responded the proposed redevelopment to include restaurants and patio area(s) are completely contained in the boundaries of the subject site, adding there is no incursion of private property onto public property.

Mr. Walter Hughes addressed the Commission and with graphics pointed out the changes to the plan since the last meeting. Mr. Hughes told the Commission the unit count remains the same with six units per floor all with lake views.

Commissioner Workinger asked if the unit sizes are the same as previously presented. Mr. Hughes responded the size of the units has changed. They will now range in size from 1,100 to 3,000 square feet.

Chair Byron asked if the City's parking requirements are met with this proposal. Mr. Hughes responded to the best of his knowledge parking requirements are met. He added he believes if their calculations are correct the City would require around 600 parking spaces to support this development and this project provides roughly 632 parking spaces. Chair Byron asked how many parking stalls are earmarked for retail. Mr. Hughes responded the retail component provides 274 parking spaces. He added the retail component was designed to be self sustained.

Commissioner Workinger said it appears to him there is some surface parking. Mr. Witzig responded that is correct, the plan provides 44 surface parking spaces. He explained retail tenants tend to desire some surface parking.

Commissioner Runyan noted the landscaping element of the project and questioned if the proponents feel the over-story trees (along France Avenue) may obstruct signage on the retail element. Mr. Witzig said it is important to retain the landscaping along France Avenue, adding signage will have to be addressed keeping in mind the landscaping features.

Commissioner McClelland asked if the proposed plan addresses the future transit line. Mr. Larsen responded if you look at the plans the transit line is indicated in the form of an easement. The tram would enter/exit the site and "skirt" the oval. Mr. Larsen said the easement for the tram is a broad easement.

Commissioner Brown commented the building height requires a variance, questioning what the hardship is. Mr. Larsen responded the configuration of the site and building placement could be considered the hardship. Mr. Larsen pointed out the Centennial Lakes Master Plan is a negotiated development. He said the question is if this proposal fits within the overall development plan.

Commissioner Grabiell asked if the Commission were to approve this request, what comes next. Mr. Larsen explained if the Commission recommends preliminary approval (or denial) this plan is forwarded to the Council for their comments, conditions and preliminary approval. It then comes back to the Commission for final approval and the Commission forwards their final recommendations to the Council for their final approval. Mr. Larsen added the "short of it is" this will be heard at minimum three more times.

Commissioner Fischer asked Mr. Larsen what the status is of the Greater Southdale Area Study Plan. Mr. Larsen responded the study is in its final stages. He explained the City ran into some difficulty with the County on traffic issues with regard to France and York Avenues. Mr. Larsen said the study was to be completed in early September, but now it is felt it will be ready for Council consideration in November.

Commissioner Fischer asked Mr. Larsen if the consultants would feel this proposal is in conflict with the study. Mr. Larsen responded this proposal is not in conflict with the study, adding the consultants are aware of this proposal. Mr. Larsen said the study addresses building height acknowledging there is opportunity to develop “up”; however placement of the taller structures is left-open.

Commissioner Fischer said he would like to see a more detailed elevation of the tower from lake side (east). He said the elevation facing the park, in his opinion, is very important and it should be every bit as “grand” as the front elevation. Commissioner Fischer wondered if housing could be proposed at grade along the park boundary. Commissioner Fischer commented that he likes the design concept of addressing France Avenue with the retail buildings instead of a “sea of parking”. Continuing, Commissioner Fischer said from his standpoint it is great not to view so many surface parking spaces from France Avenue. Commissioner Fischer said in his opinion the design of the proposed condo tower is extremely important. He said the exterior materials, window treatments, etc. can make the difference between an OK project and a great project. Commissioner Fischer stated he hopes more could be accomplished with the design of the condo tower, adding what is proposed, at least in his opinion, is similar to what he has already seen in the market place.

Commissioner Schroeder agreed with comments from Commissioner Fischer that adding different window treatments, exterior materials, etc. can make a huge difference. Commissioner Schroeder asked Mr. Hughes what “design scheme” they are trying to hit. Mr. Hughes said their goal is more toward a traditional design versus a glass and stainless design. Continuing, Mr. Hughes said the structure will be layered with exterior materials to include brick, and cast stone. Commissioner Schroeder said he is looking forward to more detailed design plans (especially the east elevation). He stressed this is an important high profile site in Edina, adding he would love to see an inspirational design. Commissioner Schroeder pointed out the park is a great feature, an asset to the site and the community, and anything that can be done to integrate the park with the private development should be done. Commissioner Schroeder stated with this proposal there is an opportunity to “frame” the park from France Avenue and integrate the public with the private. He pointed out that presently from France Avenue there is limited if no view of the park, adding the right design and structure placement could afford park views from France Avenue.

Mr. Hughes in response to previous comments told the Commission he is unsure if housing can be constructed at grade; however, he believes the proposed restaurants will interact with the park. He said tower residents, Edina residents and visitors can easily access the restaurants, retail shopping areas and public park.

Commissioner Fischer said he wants the developer to make sure they design this in an integrated fashion. He added the goal should be seeing people enjoying themselves and the amenities provided through the park system and its housing and retail components. Commissioner Fischer added one issue that is important in Edina is affordable housing, noting he understands this project is not the place for it, but is worth mentioning.

Mr. Larsen commented the proponent was not aware of the City's continued study on how to provide more affordable housing opportunities within Edina city limits.

Commissioner Lonsbury agreed the proposed tower would not accommodate affordable housing and suggested affordable housing could be developed above the new retail along France Avenue. He pointed out this may be an opportunity to "hit middle ground".

Chair Byron commented in his opinion the developers are at a disadvantage because the City is undertaking a study that includes this site, adding it may have been more beneficial to coordinate redevelopments with the CAC study. Mr. Larsen agreed, however, he said the consultants were made aware of this proposal as they made their recommendations. Mr. Larsen pointed out details will be worked out prior to final approvals. Chair Byron suggested a delay for another month to allow the CAC to finalize their study.

Commissioner Brown commented in his opinion, at least at this point, he doesn't feel the design works well with the site. He said this site is unique with challenges. Concluding Commissioner Brown said he has concerns with the internal layout of the proposal. He added he believes the density of the proposal is driven by the cost of the land, not necessarily what is best for the site.

Chair Byron reiterated he still has concerns, adding the traffic on France Avenue is a major concern. He pointed out in certain areas France Avenue goes from four to three lanes and this development will only increase the already congested area. Commissioner Byron said there needs to be an alternative in getting traffic off France Avenue. Commissioner Byron also added he has had a difficult time visualizing this proposal on this site.

Mr. Witzig reported his company is working with Marshall Fields and there is potential for a public road. Mr. Larsen acknowledged, with regard to Gallagher

Drive that both private and public obstacles must be worked out. Continuing, Mr. Larsen pointed out Edina's City Engineer has presented to the proponent development parameters that will be adhered to.

Chair Byron asked where guest parking will occur. Mr. Witzig responded guest parking will occur underground. Chair Byron asked where "services" will gain access. Mr. Hughes responded there is a side loading/parking area with an enclosed garage that will also accommodate restaurant deliveries. Chair Byron questioned where deliveries will occur for the retail component. Mr. Hughes responded retail deliveries will occur at the south end in a "hammerhead" situation.

Commissioner McClelland told the proponents she is encouraged they are receptive to their suggestions, adding at this time if there is a vote, she will have to abstain. Commissioner McClelland said in her opinion her comfort level hasn't been met. She added certain aspects of the proposal are still too "fluid" and she would like to seem them "hammered out" a bit more. Commissioner McClelland commented she isn't "down" on this project; there is just so much to consider and too many loose ends.

Commissioner Lonsbury told the proponents, he likes what he sees, and likes the direction the proposal is going; however, he still believes there are too many unanswered questions. Continuing, Commissioner Lonsbury said his unease may stem from the fact that presently the City is conducting a study of the greater Southdale area and without that study as a guide anything the Commission considers may be premature. Commissioner Lonsbury acknowledged at this time the Commission is being asked to approve more of a "concept", adding he still is not comfortable making that decision. Concluding, Commissioner Lonsbury stated in his opinion this parcel is a key parcel in the Centennial Lakes plan and he wants to make sure this redevelopment is done correctly. Concluding, Commissioner Lonsbury added Edinborough and Centennial are projects the City spent careful thought, energy, time and money on and the Commission needs to ensure the outcome of this project is something the City can be proud of.

A discussion ensued with Commission Members expressing their opinion that there are too many loose ends that need to be addressed. Commissioner's indicated it is difficult to envision the proposal and suggested that a more detailed survey and site plan be provided. Commissioner's also suggested it would be of great benefit to them to have the Southdale Study as a guide. The Commission acknowledged it is unfortunate the Greater Southdale Area Study wasn't complete at the time the proponent's submitted their application. Commissioner's reiterated the study would be of great benefit to them.

Mr. Larsen told the Commission it is not the fault of the proponents the study wasn't completed, adding they have the right to submit an application and have it acted on in a timely fashion. Continuing, Mr. Larsen noted the

Commission also has the right to ask the proponents for a continuance. Mr. Larsen said that while the Greater Southdale Study isn't complete it should be completed by the time the Commission next meets. Mr. Larsen said the study is intended to be used as a guide or tool.

Commissioner Lonsbury moved to continue the request for an amendment to the Centennial Lakes Master Plan to the Planning Commission meeting of October 26, 2005. Commissioner McClelland seconded the motion.

Commissioner Grabiell stated he supports the motion but wants to make sure Mr. Johnson's letter and the letter from the housing committee is added to the record. Continuing, Commissioner Grabiell said he continues to be concerned about the height of the proposed building especially as it relates to existing buildings in the area. He commented if this tower were proposed amongst other towers, that would be one thing, but the proposed tower is "not the norm" for this area and it could stick out like a sore thumb.

Chair Byron called the vote; all voted aye, motion carried.

Chair Byron thanked the proponents for their presentation and informed them the Commission next meets on October 26th.

I. INTERGOVERNMENTAL BUSINESS:

Commissioner Lonsbury said this proposal may re-raise our consciousness about redevelopment, adding there will be other major redevelopments in this area in the future. Commissioner Lonsbury said the Council might want to consider putting a moratorium on developments (in this corridor) until the Southdale study is complete. He pointed out the City is in the middle of a massive study and it appears to be unfair to developers if they come in with a proposal while this study is occurring. Commissioner Lonsbury said at least to him this is something the City should think about.

Commissioner Runyan commented in a sense "we are putting the cart before the horse". Commissioner Lonsbury agreed.

Mr. Larsen acknowledged their timing is unfortunate.

Commissioner Workinger told the Commission he was appointed to serve on the Transportation Committee as Commission liaison. Commissioners thanked Commissioner Workinger for his service on the Committee.

II. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Schroeder at 9:00 PM

Jackie Hoogenakker